

# Some Fresh Post-War Impressions of Europe

## The Tragedy of "Exchange"; After-Effects of Suffering Differ in Different Nations; Germany and France at Close Hand

By a Woman Traveler

HAVING landed in quiet, undisturbed Holland, on our way to Switzerland we had to cross part of Germany. Our evening meal was taken on the German train. There were six in our party. They gave us a good meal, only there was no sugar and for it all we paid, wine included, 168 marks, a little more than \$2. Then came our first impression of shame, as though we had been robbing somebody, for if the same six persons could never have had a square meal anywhere in America for \$2, why should it be right for them to take the food in Europe at this low price?

The traveler cannot but feel that either he is shamelessly robbed in America or else he is defrauding somebody in Europe. And it makes one realize the ugliness of the game being played by international finance. We could not tip with pfennigs, only marks. The women in our party said: "The porters here work as hard as those in America; we cannot give them less than a quarter (which meant 15 marks)."

And the men gave it.

The porters were amazed—but we . . . We were ashamed . . .

The morning saw us in Frankfurt, just as the trains were bringing in the workmen and women to the town. They were poorly clad and very thin. When our children understood, they were silent for a long time after we had stood there watching.

This was but a rapid impression of Germany—the next day saw us in Switzerland.

Switzerland is changed, so very, very changed. The proverbial simplicity and contentment of yore have given place to GREED, spelt with big letters. All the Swiss care about now is money and they are out to get it, yet their franc has not depreciated in value as much as the French franc or German mark.

And during our stay in Switzerland, the dinner for six persons, at 168 marks, on the German train, was often recalled to our mind . . . We wondered how the Germans did it.

Yes, Switzerland is sadly changed and she is discontented. Her "hoteliers" had no tourists for so long, their property lost in value, so they first mortgaged and then sold it, and now the tourists are the guests of the banks that bought the hotels and pensions.

Later we went to France, straight to Paris, where life is gay and dear, very dear. Could we see traces of the ravages of the long war? In a general way, no! but on close observation some facts were striking.

One very fine day, on a Sunday, the avenue des Champs Élysées was thick with people going in both directions, and we suddenly awakened to the fact that among the men, there were only undersized, half cretins and old men. At first we thought it was a mere coincidence, but finally I sat down and during more than two hours watched the people passing. There were so few tall, fine Frenchmen in the prime of life in that crowd. We could hardly believe our own eyes, just as we found it difficult to keep count of the number of Jews we saw out of every hundred men.

It was a revelation. Afterward what had seemed to us so abnormal was explained and we understood. The French race seems to have lost its best during the cruel war and the race implanting itself in France to replace it is decidedly inferior.

This fact also accounted for our having thought that the street life of Paris was as noisy and glary as before. On close inspection we found that the aliens and foreigners provide the glamour and the noise.

Traces of the war are also deep in France, but one must look for them in the French homes. Those, however, are closed to the public eye, and so the general verdict goes forth that Paris is as gay as ever—yes—but Paris is no longer essentially French.

It took me hours of solitary roaming in the magnificent grandeur and simplicity of Versailles to live over again the glorious past of France and the French.

Old Paris, the Louvre, Notre Dame, the Tuileries, the perfect harmony of Paris, unequalled anywhere in the world, set one sadly speculating on what might today have been achieved by the French genius for harmony, if their development had not been ruthlessly stopped more than 100 years ago, when the foreign Illuminism made war on and destroyed the intellectual power of France.

For more than 100 years France has been in a state of stagnation.

With but few, very few, exceptions the spirit of France seems dead. Whatever branch of life one looks into, be it politics, industry, commerce, professions, universities, one finds that the power directing its course is not French, and the impression left is one of infinite sadness.

A short visit to England came next, and the impression there can be summed up in one word—sordid. Everything there fitted in that adjective, including the minds of the people. Weather was bad, hotels inferior, and up in the north, out under a deluging rain, we saw many children in rags. We were shocked. Once in a

church, in a poor part of the city, there was a children's service. A large number of them attended. Clothes were not only poor but untidy, torn and dirty. Then we visited some homes and came to the conclusion that poverty in England is essentially dirty. Later we made comparisons.

Then our itinerary took us into Germany for a stay. On the way to the Rhine we saw the devastated provinces of Northern France. One cannot but shudder at the remembrance of such a sight. It seemed as though the letters forming the word "civilization" were all broken up and scattered and the word never could be spelled again.

What havoc! What awful destruction! The soul is numbed—one is speechless—you look and look again and you cannot believe what you see. You try to imagine the past with homes, people, children, churches, and you cannot recall a past to those places. The present is terrible, but when you want to look ahead and foresee a future to these ruins, you are puzzled. Why is there no reconstruction being done? You come across places where such work was begun, but it is now abandoned. You are amazed, you question, and the answer staggers you: "Nobody wants to work." "But why? There are so many hundreds of thousands unemployed in France." "Well," comes the reply, "the

a stranger whom you have been told has just lost his son. You feel his sorrow but you are silent.

Next to this deep impression of "silence" comes that caused by the "strength" of the German people. The "silent strength." You see no evident sign of it; in fact, it strikes you as being underground. You feel it everywhere; it is invisible, but it permeates you. You know it is there and you wonder when and how it will show itself. All you are sure of is that it will manifest itself.

Berlin afforded the opportunity of an interesting study. It also is far from being all German. Jews seem to spring up from every quarter of the town. They contrast deeply with the Germans. Some parts of Berlin, like Schöneberg and Charlottenburg, are full of them. They are the prosperous, expensively, though not well-clad, well-fed sleek element. Their children contrast strangely with the German children in whose countenances one frequently sees the ravages of the war. They, the German children, are poorly but so cleanly dressed.

Who will describe the eloquence and the tragedy of the clothes worn by the Germans! Almost worn threadbare, but oh! so clean! And no one seems conscious of the poverty they betray. The dignity of poverty in Germany is most impressive.

After the great upheaval which Germany had experienced, I was eager to get an idea of the wishes of the nation as to its form of government. Many answers were given but few, if any, were more than party opinions from monarchistic to socialist. It was puzzling. And then came the news of the Kaiserin's, the German Empress', death.

Immediately most parts of Berlin (not Schöneberg and not all Charlottenburg) exhibited the national flag with black crepe around. Then came the day of the funeral. The present government had at first issued orders that the interment would take place at night, but had been obliged to yield before the firmly expressed will of the people, who had given it to understand that no such thing would be allowed.

The press gave the description of the procession, but it was not that which was of interest. It was the atmosphere in which the whole ceremony was shrouded.

The princes were there, the generals, the leaders on sea and land, the officers and the aristocracy and many, many people who had thronged to the place in spite of all the obstacles that had been placed by the government to restrict attendance.

And again the most impressive thing of all was the dense and death-like silence. Tears, even on the faces of men, but not a word.

And when the ceremony was over, all dispersed still in silence.

For several consecutive Sundays there came to Potsdam not the princes, not the generals, not the aristocracy, but the people. Neither the excessive heat, nor fatigue could deter them. They came and in long, long silent files, they waited for their turn to bring their token of fidelity to their late empress.

Then I had the answer I had sought, and while I could not summarize it in saying that the German people want back a monarchy, I emerged from such scenes with the firm conviction that the people will not long stand alien, disorderly and un-national rule.

Many have asked: "Do the German people work? Indeed they do, and they work ceaselessly. Their own opinion on the subject cannot be better illustrated than by quoting this answer made by a German workingman. "Yes, we work a great deal, but it is nothing to what we could do if we only had enough to eat."

The Germans possess two qualities. They are wonderfully industrious and they are essentially rural. This second quality shows itself in all classes of the people and at all ages. On Saturdays, Sundays and holidays the school children are taken out to the woods by their teachers and at the end of the day their going home is a picturesque sight. All carry flowers, green plants, some wear pretty flower wreaths on their heads and all look happy.

For their pleasure the people count on their physical ability more than on the service of machines—they walk much—and so on Sundays the roads are dotted by itinerant pleasure seekers who tramp along, carry their knapsacks and play the guitar and mandolin.

After having seen the love of the German for nature and country I was able to understand the only real beauty of Berlin, the great avenues planted with magnificent trees, the street gardens and parks so wonderfully cared for, and the windows of every house adorned with plants and flowers.

I had gone to Germany anything but a pro-German, as the saying goes. I came away admiring the "spirit" of the "German folk."



"It seemed as though the letters forming the word 'civilization' were all broken up and scattered and that the word never could be spelled again." The picture is of the cathedral in Cambrai, France.

government has no money to pay them." Then you mention the fact that a considerable number of millions were subscribed by the nation for reconstruction, and then you are told that the "Committee" that received them squandered them, and there is an end of the matter.

You begin wondering whether the world is an immense Bedlam.

The Rhine! The occupied provinces—foreign troops in Germany! French, English, American soldiers at the stations. You want to speak to them and ask them why they are there. Then you remember the unpaid indemnity, and when you recall the French millions which did not help to reconstruct Northern France, you wonder whether after all the German millions would help the matter.

The trains in Germany are as punctual as ever. We were surprised. We had lost the habit of reaching any destination on time.

One of the first things that impresses the stranger in Berlin is the silence of the town. Indeed, all through my stay in Germany it was this great silence which impressed me most.

You hear silence in Germany and it conveys much that is difficult of interpretation. You feel that this silence has an emphatic meaning—it speaks.

It tells you that the German people think, and you wonder what! You dare not ask. It is like meeting